

Alec Templeton
KING OF THE KEYS.

Mary Graham Bonner

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KING OF THE KEYS

By Mary Graham Bonner



Alec Templeton, the pianist, cannot read a note of music or see any of the keys on which he plays, for he has been blind since he was born. Yet he has become so famous that he is known as the King of the Keys.

I had enjoyed Alec Templeton's radio broadcasts and knew that he had given delight to many listeners with his skill at the piano and also with his merry talk. I knew that he had toured all over the European continent giving concerts, and that he had made recordings of both classical and light music.

I was eager to meet him, to hear his story and to find out how a person with such a handicap could be so cheerful. I thought, also, that boys and girls would like to know these things about Alec Templeton, so I asked the broadcasting company if it would be possible for me to interview the pianist. I was told that yes, I might attend a rehearsal of Templeton's next broadcast, and that after the rehearsal I might talk to him and then write this story for you.

When I arrived at the broadcasting studio, Alec Templeton was already at the piano. The orchestra leader and the musicians were on the stage, too, all going over a program which was to be given that evening. Electricians were arranging wires about the studio, and an announcer was there, holding his part of the script.

Alec was now trying one of the novelty imitations for which he is so well known. When he had finished he turned toward his wife, who sat beside me in the half-darkened theater. "Do you think that's a 'ging,' Mrs. T?" he asked.

A "ging" means a good number in Templeton talk—for Alec has always been fond of making up words as well as musical compositions. We all decided that the number was a "ging," which meant it would stay on the program.

Alec had heard me speak during this discussion, and when I went to talk to him after the rehearsal he recognized me before I had a

MOLLIE'S DREAM

Picture Story by Jenia Miller



chance to introduce myself. Just as some people remember faces, so he remembers the sound of different voices. He likes to know the name of everyone he meets, and having heard the voice of a new acquaintance, he will recognize the person next time he hears him.

When Alec Templeton was two years old, in 1912, he climbed up on the piano bench of his home in Cardiff, Wales, and picked out the melody of "My Hero" from "The Chocolate Soldier." He did not know what he was playing, but he had heard someone singing the tune.

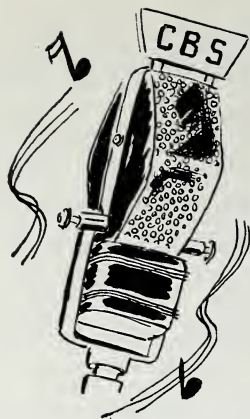
There were no musicians in Alec's family, but there was no doubt about what he was going to do when he grew up. In fact he wasted no time about it, and it was not long after he had played "My Hero" that one of Cardiff's finest piano teachers took the boy as a pupil.

Before he was five years old Alec was playing the sonatas of Mozart, Beethoven and Haydn. The first piece he remembers playing was Mozart's A Minor Sonata. He had also begun to compose music of his own. At the age of five he conducted a choir of young singers at a children's concert given in Cardiff.

Only one thing in Alec's musical training gave him trouble in those boyhood days, and that was the phonograph. To be sure, in those days the record machines had not become perfected, but Alec laughs now when he admits that he used to shiver over the shrill, penetrating sounds. "It was just one of those fears that you can't explain," he told me. He was made so miserable by a phonograph that whenever records were being played the boy covered up his ears, actually shivering in his boots.

Then, when he was about eight years old, the masters in school were eager for Alec to listen to a concert of records that was given every Sunday afternoon in the school dining room. Alec wanted to be reasonable, so first he listened three rooms away from the big hall. After he got used to the machine-made music from this distance, he tried listening two rooms away, and then one room away. The hardest step was to go into the dining hall at last and hear the concert. But he did it, and after that recovered from his fear. Now his hobby is collecting records.

He lost this one fear in school; he loved French, hated arithmetic,



and enjoyed his companions. He could entertain them with funny imitations of people, which he made up on the piano, and he never had to be coaxed to play jolly, rollicking tunes. He never felt any difference between himself and other young people.

When Alec was ten years old, he was a soloist in the very first concert ever broadcast in Cardiff. Radio was then new, and it seemed unbelievable that air waves could carry concerts into people's homes. Yet everyone in the studio knew it was so. Alec was told he must not speak. But when he was given the signal to play, and struck a few notes on the keyboard, he forgot about being on the air. He spoke right up, in clear, ringing words, to say, "This piano is out of tune!"

They whispered to him not to speak and then Alec realized that a great many listening people had heard what he said. Very well, he would say no more about the out-of-tune piano. He nodded and finished his performance.

Soon he was playing with the Cardiff Symphony Orchestra. For his first appearance Alec played Beethoven's "Emperor Concerto." It took him seven hours to learn all the notes as his teacher slowly played the music to him. After he had memorized it he did feel somewhat tired, so for fun he learned two short, easy little numbers!

When Alec was sixteen he was giving concerts throughout Great Britain, broadcasting, and making the improvisations which are always amusing to his audiences. For these occasions, one person in the audience generally selects a classical piece, a second person chooses a popular song, a third suggests a modern dance tune. Alec, without any advance knowledge of what these are to be, makes one tune out of all of them.

In 1936 Alec came to America, where he has lived ever since. He says he was really born an American, for though he became a naturalized citizen only a few years ago, the Fourth of July is his birthday.

Once a week, now, Alec Templeton broadcasts. In between he gives concerts, plays for Army camps, or composes at his home in Greenwich, Connecticut. He has published many works, among

them a "Topsy Turvy Suite" in which he makes the old masters sound very up to date. He also works in the Templeton victory garden, having planted all the corn and potatoes himself.

Every composition Alec learns by having it played very slowly to him. As he listens he memorizes the notes. Usually he only has to hear it once. He says that some days he is dull and has to hear a piece a second time before he can remember all of it.

Loved by those who know him, and by his audiences of all ages, he in turn loves people. His gaiety, sense of humor and merriment are part of his nature. When he gives imitations on the piano he is funny without ever being mean. He has no gloomy moods, and never feels sorry for himself. He gives happiness and is happy.

Yes, this story of success, of joy and of music, is also the story of a man who has never been able to see. An overpowering obstacle? The King of the Keys has not found it so. Alec Templeton does not allow blindness to keep him from having a busy, happy life.



PUZZLE JINGLES

MISSING-WORD LIMERICKS

By Philip Gordon England

An affectionate laddie named Pat
Lost a very remarkable cat.
Then he came home one night,
And exclaimed with delight,
For his pussy lay there on the _ _ _.

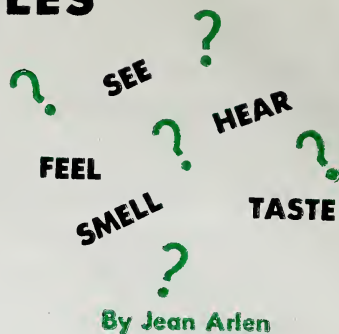
A boy whose first name was Grover
Said, "Now my troubles are over,
I looked all around
Till, at last, on the ground,
I found this green four-leafed _ _ _ _ _."

A private stood up by the door.
"Could I have a week off, or more?"
"Sure," the officer said,
With a nod of his head,
"As soon as we finish the _ _ _."

A girl who was always called Toots
For rainstorms did not give two hoots
Till her feet got so wet
She decided to get
A pair of high rubber _ _ _ _ _.

A boy had a toy that was light;
It could fly to a very great height
Just held by a string
(The remarkable thing),
And, oh, how that boy loved his _ _ _ _ _.

There once was a sergeant named Heep
Who drove a car that could leap
Up mountains and down,
So, going to town,
Sergeant Heep always leaped in his _ _ _ _ _.



Of five senses,
do you know
Which one fits
each verse below?

How do you tell
the daytime from night?
How do you know
that snow is white?

When bells are ringing,
or whistles blow,
Or someone calls,
how do you know?

How can you tell,
without being told,
If water is hot
or if it's cold?

How do you know,
with pickles to eat,
Whether they're sour
or whether they're sweet?

What tells you when
Mother is wearing perfume,
Or when honeysuckle
is brought in the room?

Answers on Finnie's page

KING OF THE KEYS.

[illegible]

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	HIGH	WIDE	THICKNESS		HIGH	WIDE	THICKNESS
1823	8 inches	7 inches	1/4 inch	1829	12 inches	10 inches	1/4 inch
1824	10 "	7 "	01 "	1830	12 "	10 "	02 "
1825	9 "	6 "	00 "	1832	13 "	11 "	00 "
1826	11 1/2 "	7 1/2 "	12 "	1833	14 "	11 "	00 "
1827	10 "	7 1/2 "	00 "	1834	15 "	12 "	00 "
1828	13 "	8 "	00 "				

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